

DOCUMENT RESUME

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Environmental Problems at U.S. Overseas Military Activities
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Report to the Congress; by Elmer B. Staats, Comptroller General.

Issue Area: Environmental Protection Programs (2207); Utilizing
Technology Developed by Other Countries (2207).

Environmental Protection Programs: Environmental Protection
Standards

Contact: Community and Economic Development Div.

Budget Function: Natural Resources, Environment, and Energy:
Pollution Control and Abatement (304); International Affairs
(150); National Defense: Department of Defense - Procurement
& Contracts (058).

Organization Concerned: Environmental Protection Agency;
Department of State; Department of Defense.

Congressional Relevance: House Committee on Armed Services;
Senate Committee on Armed Services; Congress.

Authority: Executive Order 11752.

There has been a growing concern about pollution among host countries at installations occupied by U.S. forces in Europe. Legislation states that U.S. activities should cooperate with host nations to solve environmental problems where consistent with U.S. policy, but troop-stationing agreements do not specifically discuss U.S. and host-nation responsibilities on pollution abatement. Findings/Conclusions: Although a complete inventory of pollution problems has not been developed, military officials believe that \$500 million might be needed to correct deficiencies at U.S. Army installations alone. Because there is no clear guidance on responsibilities, the services in Europe have managed pollution abatement programs on a piecemeal basis. Current Department of Defense (DOD) policy states that U.S. funds can be used for environmental improvement only if DOD originally provided the facility in question. Host nations are responsible for improving their own facilities. This policy could limit U.S. consideration of environmental improvements at its European facilities to about 20% of problems identified. Recommendations: The Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State and with technical assistance from the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, should change its overseas environmental policy to emphasize the environmental and associated economic and host-nation concerns affecting U.S. overseas activities. The Secretaries of Defense and State should demonstrate U.S. willingness to negotiate and carry out an agreement for environmental improvement and, when environmental degradation becomes an issue, they should consult with the host nations to resolve environmental problems at defense installations. The Secretary of Defense should direct the appropriate commands to identify and report on host-nation

environmental laws and standards, the extent of pollution problems and remedial costs at U.S. overseas installations, and the ownership or source of financing for facilities on U.S. installations. (HTW)

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AT
OVERSEAS MILITARY ACTIVITIES

D I G E S T

Millions of dollars may be needed to correct known or potential sources of pollution at installations occupied by U.S. forces in Europe because of a growing concern within host countries to abate pollution.

U.S. military forces operate out of about 1,180 installations and activities located in 11 European countries. For the most part, these installations belong to the host nations, although they are occupied by U.S. forces.

A complete inventory of pollution problems--aircraft noise, sewage and waste disposal, heating plant emissions, and ground water pollution by petroleum products--has not been developed, but military officials in Europe believe that as much as \$500 million might be needed to correct deficiencies at U.S. Army installations alone. (See pp. 1, 2, 11, and 18.)

Responsibility for these corrections has not been clear. Legislation states that U.S. activities should cooperate with host nations' initiatives to solve environmental problems where they are consistent with the foreign policy of the United States. Executive Order 11752 requires U.S. facilities overseas to comply with host-nation pollution abatement requirements of general applicability. However, troop-stationing agreements do not specifically discuss U.S. and host-nation responsibilities on environmental pollution abatement. (See pp. 4 to 6.)

Because there is no clear guidance on responsibilities, the services in Europe

have managed pollution abatement programs on a piecemeal basis. The full extent of existing pollution problems is not known, and laws and standards of host nations have not been fully identified. (See p. 11.)

Current Defense policy states that U.S. funds can be used for environmental improvement only if Defense originally provided the facility in question. Host nations are responsible for improving their own facilities. (See p. 5.)

On the other hand, some German Government officials have indicated that the United States is responsible for correcting environmental problems. The full effect of the new Defense policy is not known, but U.S. Army officials believe the policy could limit U.S. consideration of environmental improvements at its European facilities to about 20 percent of the problems already identified. (See pp. 7 and 8.)

While GAO is aware of the budgetary constraints affecting U.S. programs and the high priority of other command responsibilities such as training and readiness, GAO believes the United States should place additional emphasis on environmental problems associated with its overseas forces. As a means of accomplishing this, Defense should negotiate needed pollution abatement agreements with individual countries, clarifying the responsibilities of each government for environmental improvement. (See pp. 3 and 9.)

Projects could be programed to address the most critical problems first, regardless of ownership, and could be carried out on a mutually agreeable abatement schedule--based on the availability of host-nation and U.S. funding. Costs for joint projects could be based on a cost-sharing formula negotiated with host nations. (See p. 9.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State and with technical assistance from the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, should change its overseas environmental policy to emphasize the environmental and associated economic and host-nation concerns affecting U.S. overseas activities. (See p. 9.)

GAO recommends that the Secretaries of Defense and State demonstrate U.S. willingness to negotiate and carry out an agreement for environmental improvement and, when environmental degradation becomes an issue, that they consult with the host nations to resolve environmental problems at Defense installations. (See p. 9.)

GAO also recommends that the Secretary of Defense, to provide a basis for negotiating a cooperative agreement with host nations when pollution abatement becomes an issue, direct the appropriate commands to identify and report to Defense:

- Host-nation environmental laws and standards.
- The extent of pollution problems and remedial costs at U.S. overseas installations.
- The ownership or source of financing for facilities on U.S. installations. (See p. 27.)

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Department of State and the Environmental Protection Agency supported GAO's recommendations and expressed their willingness to assist Defense in developing an overseas environmental policy. While Defense questioned certain aspects of the report, it said it would have no objection

to accepting and carrying out GAO's recommendations, provided that Defense components would not be required to fund and conduct programs which the United States is under no legal obligation to accomplish, and any action taken would be consistent with overall U.S. foreign policy objectives. (See pp. 9, 10, and 27.)